

## SOMETHING ABOUT THE ARTISTS OF OLD LYME

When you members of the New London County Farm and Home Bureau on the afternoon of Tuesday, August 11, arrive at that point where the Boston Post Road nears the edge of the village of Old Lyme, your attention will be attracted to a long, low, silvery-shingled building, bearing in gold letters above its classic doorway the words "Lyme Art Association". By that token you will know--as no doubt many of you have long known--that you have arrived in the heart of the happy painting grounds of what is probably this country's best-known colony of artists. It is so well known that for decades past, art lovers have come to it from all parts of the world. Particularly have they come to Old Lyme since 1921, that being the year when the Association's gallery was built and opened to the public. Last year, for example, the exhibitions--one of which you are to see on your visit of August 11--were visited by the residents from forty-two different states of the union and a dozen foreign countries. Some of these visitors came from as far away as Melbourne, Australia, and Shanghai, China. This is noted that you may all the more realize how important and famous is the group of men and women who constitute what is called the "Lyme Art Association".

The pioneers of the Lyme group of artists first began to congregate in Old Lyme in 1900. In the early summer of 1902 several of them decided to band together and give an exhibition of their paintings. Arrangements were made and at the Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library on Main Street in Old Lyme, on August 27 and 28, 1902, was given an exhibition which became the first summer art show given by a group of artists in America. As we shall see, the annual showings, of which that was the original, have never been interrupted at Old Lyme. There were twelve

painters represented in that first exhibition, the most noted at that particular time being the well-known landscape painter, Henry W. Ranger. Two of these original exhibitors--Frank V. DuMont and Louis Paul Dessar--are still very active members of the present Lyme Association. During your tour of the gallery you will find oil paintings by both of them.

In 1903 a second exhibition was held in the Library, this time for a period of three days. New names appearing were those of Childe Hassam, one of America's foremost artists who died within recent months. Another was Will Howe Foote, a prize-winner on many occasions and whose interesting subjects portraying natives of Jamaica you will see on your visit to Old Lyme.

It would, of course, be tedious to go into a detailed history of the Lyme artists. Suffice it to say that the men already mentioned together with others exhibiting at the time and subsequently joined by still other painters and sculptors, continued to give annual shows at the Library. As time went on the duration of the exhibitions was extended to more than a week. In order to facilitate the handling of the growing displays, an artists' committee was elected to handle business details. Of course, as is the case today, an admission was charged to the exhibition. To be exact, fifty cents has always been the price of admission to the annual oil shows. Also, as is now the case, whenever an artist sold a picture, he paid a certain commission to the committee's treasurer. As the years passed, the need to be more definitely organized was realized, and in 1914 the artists incorporated the Lyme Art Association. Again we come to the passing of years. During that time art patrons of means, realizing the importance of the Old Lyme group, lent

a certain amount of assistance to a plan which ultimately resulted in the building of a gallery for the annual exhibition. This gallery, erected from plans drawn by the late Charles A. Platt, a distinguished New York architect, was opened in 1921. It is not necessary to enter into details concerning the financing of the proposition. However, it should be added that the bulk of the money necessary to make the gallery possible, was furnished by the artists themselves. Thus, as has often been said, the Lyme Art gallery was the first, if indeed not the very first, gallery built by artists. It is, at the present moment, entirely owned by the thirty-seven men and women who constitute its artist membership.

The first exhibition given in the new gallery was what was then termed, and is still called, the annual exhibition of oil paintings and sculpture. However, twelve years ago, it was decided to open the season with an added exhibition. This has gone on each year since that time and includes the lighter media, such as water colors, pastels, etchings, etc., but never oil paintings.

But still the audiences grew in size and it became apparent that there was room for yet another exhibition each year. The result was the introduction of a third exhibition which now annually follows that particular one to which you have been invited August 11. Generally speaking, the three main exhibitions extend over a period of approximately three months, starting in mid-June and terminating around the twentieth of September.

For want of a better word, the artists of Old Lyme have been said to form a colony. It is not, however, to be supposed from this that the men and women who compose it live in a small district, such as, for example, the Latin Quarter in Paris, or Greenwich Village in

our own New York City. As a matter of measurement, some of the Lyme artists have homes that are as much as fifteen miles apart. Of the thirty-seven men and women painters and sculptors, more than two-thirds own homes in the Lyme territory. Some are winter residents, but more often the winter months find a good number of them scattered not only over our own country, but often to foreign lands. They go far afield in search of new subjects to paint. Within the past several years, some have painted in Spain, some in Italy, some in France, and some in the West Indies--to give you a few examples. Others work in Florida, in Southern California, on the Colorado desert, and in the Northwest. One of the men last winter painted in the famous Blue Valley country in Kansas.

Another point of interest is that contrary to what may be your first thought, the artists of the Lyme group are not predominantly New Englanders. The fact is only seven were born in Connecticut. Others divide their places of birth among fifteen different states in the union. Ivan G. Olinsky whose painting "Waiting"--a girl in a red jacket--is very likely to take your eye when you visit the gallery, was born in Russia. One of the younger women artists, Tosca, is a native of Florence, Italy. William Chadwick, who paints fine autumnal landscapes and splendid portraits, was born in England, though he has long lived in this country.

These facts are brought out that you may the better realize what a cosmopolitan group this is. Were it not so, it is probable that the individuals who compose it would not have that understanding which makes it possible for them to paint and model such variety of subject. True, Old Lyme and their gallery is in a sense the "home port" for these men and women, but as we have seen, they have come from many places. More-

over, in order to keep an aliveness of purpose, they still continue to go many places.

Those of you who do not already know, will be quite right in asking just how well-known the Lyme group members are in the world of art. Perhaps that can best be answered by saying that works executed by a number of these men and women are to be found in the permanent collections of more than seventy American and foreign galleries. For example, some members' work will be found in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, some in the National and in the Corcoran galleries in Washington, D. C., some in the Carnegie Institute collection in Pittsburgh. This to name but a few. To go out of our own country, it is to be noted that one of the men has a canvas which hangs in the National Gallery of New Zealand. And so on.

A member of the Association's staff last winter visited some twenty-five museums in the West, including those of the Pacific coast. He was pleased but not altogether surprised to find that in every case the directors of these museums knew a great deal about the Lyme artists. Time after time he saw paintings or sculpture by them in the museums visited. What pleased him even more was to find that everywhere people wanted to know still more than they already knew about the men and women whose pictures and modelings you are shortly to see. To cite one experience, the staff representative mentioned was asked to talk at a banquet given by sixty artists of the San Diego Artists' Guild in San Diego, Calif. ) At the conclusion of his talk, more than twenty of those present had questions to ask. All of which is recited to more definitely bring home the fact that the Lyme group of artists is of national importance and of national interest to all who are interested in the arts.



It has been said that visitors to the Old Lyme gallery have each year increased in number. This is probably because more and more people are coming to realize that there is nothing particularly mysterious about art. During the present season we have had dozens of callers who frankly stated that they had never before visited an art exhibition. They somehow had the impression that it would be "over their heads". Well, for that matter, everything that we do not know a great deal about, may be to a certain extent beyond us. On the other hand, there is no reason in the world why we should not enjoy pictures or sculpture for exactly what it means to us as individuals. There is no particular reason why we should be puzzled. We look at a beautiful sunset, a fine stretch of country in Autumn, a rushing brook, a fine stretch of meadow, boats at anchor, or whatnot, and very frequently get much pleasure out of doing so. Not many of us who are purely laymen attempt to interpret that which we see. It never occurs to us that there is need to do so. In view of this one wonders why pictures may not be viewed and enjoyed in much the same spirit.

One last word that may interest you: contrary to what seems to be the popular notion, the men and women who paint or model beautiful forms are quite like their brothers and sisters in other walks of life. At any rate, that is true as pertains to those who live and work in the Lyme country. They live perfectly normal and regular lives. To cite a few examples, one of the best of the painters who has always earned his living painting pictures, has served as a justice of the peace in Old Lyme; another, equally noted, was Old Lyme's first fire chief in the days when the equipment was drawn by hand. Still another has been master of the Grange in the north town.

Finally, it should be added that everything that you will see on your visit to the Old Lyme gallery is painted in oil, with the exception of a single miniature done in water color. Needless to say, there is also sculpture, some in plaster, some in solid stone, some in bronze, and some in terra cotta.

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